

Recent Changes to the Citizens' Election Program: 2018 Update

By: Kristin Sullivan, Chief Analyst
December 18, 2018 | 2018-R-0351

Issue

Summarize changes to the Citizens' Election Program (CEP) under 2017 special session legislation.

This report updates OLR Report [2017-R-0323](#).

Summary

The CEP is the state's voluntary public campaign financing system available to legislative and statewide office candidates. Legislation passed during the 2017 special session made several changes affecting qualifying contributions (QCs) and grants under the CEP ([PA 17-2, June Special Session](#) (JSS) (§§ 268-273 & 276), as amended by [PA 17-4, JSS](#) (§ 27)). Legislation passed during the 2018 regular session made additional changes affecting grants ([PA 18-81, §§ 38-43](#)). The changes took effect the date the legislation passed.

Changes to the CEP

QC Increase and Adjustments

By law, candidates qualify for the CEP by raising an aggregate amount of QCs, which under prior law ranged from \$5 to \$100. QCs must come from individual donors, and the required aggregate amount depends on the office sought.

[PA 17-2, JSS](#), increased the individual QC limit from \$100 to \$250, effective December 1, 2017, and January 1, 2019, for legislative and statewide office candidates, respectively. It also required the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) to adjust the maximum individual amount, as

well as the aggregate QC amounts required to qualify, for inflation. It left the \$5 minimum unchanged.

Under the act, adjustments to the QC range must be rounded to the nearest multiple of \$10, with exactly \$5 rounded up. Similarly, adjustments to the aggregate amount must be rounded to the nearest multiple of \$100, with exactly \$50 rounded up.

By increasing the required aggregate QC amounts, the act also increased the CEP spending limits. Generally, under the program, candidates must limit spending to the amount of allowable QCs, grants from the Citizens’ Election Fund, and allowable personal funds ([CGS § 9-702\(c\)](#)).

Table 1 shows when the changes to the QC amounts occur.

Table 1: QC Increase and Inflationary Adjustments

<i>Candidates For</i>	<i>Maximum Individual QC Amount Increases from \$100 to \$250</i>	<i>First Inflationary Adjustment to Maximum Individual QC Amount of \$250</i>	<i>First Inflationary Adjustment to Aggregate QC Amount</i>
Governor and lieutenant governor	January 1, 2019	January 15, 2022	January 15, 2022
Other statewide offices	January 1, 2019	January 15, 2022	January 15, 2018
State senator	December 1, 2017	January 15, 2020	January 15, 2018
State representative	December 1, 2017	January 15, 2020	January 15, 2018

Adjustments to Maximum QC Amount. Beginning with primaries and elections held in 2020 for legislative office candidates, [PA 17-2, JSS](#), requires SEEC to adjust the maximum individual QC amount by January 15, 2020. The adjustment must be based on any change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2019. After 2020, SEEC must adjust the amounts every two years by January 15, basing the adjustment on the CPI-U change from January 1, 2017 through December 31 in the year before the election.

Beginning with primaries and elections held in 2022 for statewide office candidates, [PA 17-2, JSS](#), requires SEEC to adjust the QC amount by January 15, 2022. The adjustment must be based on any change in the CPI-U from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2021. After 2022, SEEC must adjust the amount every four years by January 15, basing the adjustment on the CPI-U change from January 1, 2017 through December 31 in the year before the election.

Adjustments to Aggregate QC Amounts. Beginning with primaries and elections held in 2018 for legislative and statewide office candidates, other than candidates for governor or lieutenant governor, [PA 17-2, JSS](#), required SEEC to adjust the aggregate QC amounts, by January 15, 2018, based on CPI-U changes. As with the adjustments to the maximum QC amounts, SEEC must adjust the aggregate amounts every two years for legislative office candidates, and every four years for statewide offices candidates, using the same methodology described above (i.e., using CPI-U changes from January 1, 2017).

Beginning in 2022, SEEC must adjust the aggregate QC amounts, by January 15, 2022, for candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. SEEC must adjust the amount every four years by January 15, basing the adjustment on the CPI-U change from January 1, 2017 through December 31 in the year before the election.

Grants for the 2018 Election Cycle

By law, SEEC must adjust CEP grant amounts for inflation before each regular election for statewide office and legislative candidates. For the 2018 election cycle grants specifically, [PA 17-2, JSS](#), eliminated the requirement that SEEC adjust the grants for inflation, thus reducing them to the original statutory amounts.

[PA 18-81](#) reinstated inflationary adjustments for the 2018 election cycle but froze these grants at the 2014 and 2016 amounts for statewide office and legislative candidates, respectively. The act required SEEC to immediately adjust the 2018 grant amounts as follows:

1. for statewide office candidates, based on changes in the CPI-U from January 1, 2010, to December 31, 2013, and
2. for legislative candidates, based on changes in the CPI-U from January 1, 2008, to December 31, 2015.

Going forward, SEEC must adjust the grant amounts based on changes in the CPI-U from January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2008 for statewide office and legislative candidates, respectively, through December 31 in the year preceding the election.

Grant Reduction Schedule

[PA 17-2, JSS](#), as amended by [PA 17-4, JSS](#), established a four-step grant reduction schedule under which candidate committees receive reduced grants, beginning 70 days before the election, the closer to the election that they submit their application. The schedule applies to general election grants for major, minor, and petitioning party candidates running in a regular election. As under

prior law, legislative office candidates running in a special election receive 75% of the amount authorized for the same candidate in the general election, whether major, minor, or petitioning party.

Table 2 shows the act's grant reduction schedule.

Table 2: Grant Reduction Schedule*

<i>Days Before Election When Application Received</i>	<i>% of Applicable Grant Received</i>
70 through 57 days	75%
56 through 43 days	65%
42 through 29 days	55%
28 days through the last day that SEEC accepts applications	40%

*Applies to major, minor, and petitioning party candidates.

By law, for a general election, SEEC accepts grant applications starting on the third Wednesday in May in the election year (e.g., May 16, 2018), and every subsequent Wednesday, through the fourth to last Friday before the election (e.g., October 12, 2018) ([CGS § 9-706\(g\)\(1\)](#)).

KS:cmg